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COMICS**

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THE OFFICIAL **ADAPTATION** OF THE BLOCKBUSTER FILM

PREDATORS

PAUL TOBIN
VICTOR DRUJINIU



FEAR IS REBORN

ISBN 978-1-59582-611-4
5 0699 >
9 781595 826114

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ PRESENTS

PREDATORS

AN ADAPTATION OF THE BLOCKBUSTER FILM.

"BEATING THE BULLET"

SCRIPT

PAUL TOBIN

BASED ON THE CHARACTERS CREATED BY

JIM THOMAS & JOHN THOMAS

BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY WRITTEN BY

ALEX LITVAK & MICHAEL FINCH

PENCILS

VICTOR DRUJINIU

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CIRQUE STUDIOS

LETTERS

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Publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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Special thanks to **DEBBIE OLSHAN** at Twentieth Century Fox,
SHON BURY and **SHANTEL LAROCQUE** of Space Goat Productions,
BETSY KOCH, **EMILY DAVIS**, and **ROBERT RODRIGUEZ**.

Advertising Sales: (503) 652-8815 x370

Comic Shop Locator Service: (888) 266-4226

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ISBN: 978-1-59582-511-4

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**Peten Jungle.
Guatemala.**

*I need to take
this shot. I need
to do this.*

*We've been tracking Alvaro Otti for
four days and I could use a decent
meal. Or a toilet that
isn't a stream.*



*Alvaro is
an ex-Kaibil
soldier.*

*Not the nicest
bunch even on
a day-to-day
basis.*

*But far worse
when they turn
to trafficking.*



BEATING THE BULLET

*Trafficking
in drugs.*



*Trafficking
in women.*





The true Kaibil soldiers have a code.

It goes, "If I advance, follow me. If I stop, urge me on. If I retreat, kill me."

Leaving the Kaibiles and joining the so-called Lord's Resistance Army... that's something I would call a retreat.



So that means my team and I are just enforcing a code.

THUKT



Doing right in the world.

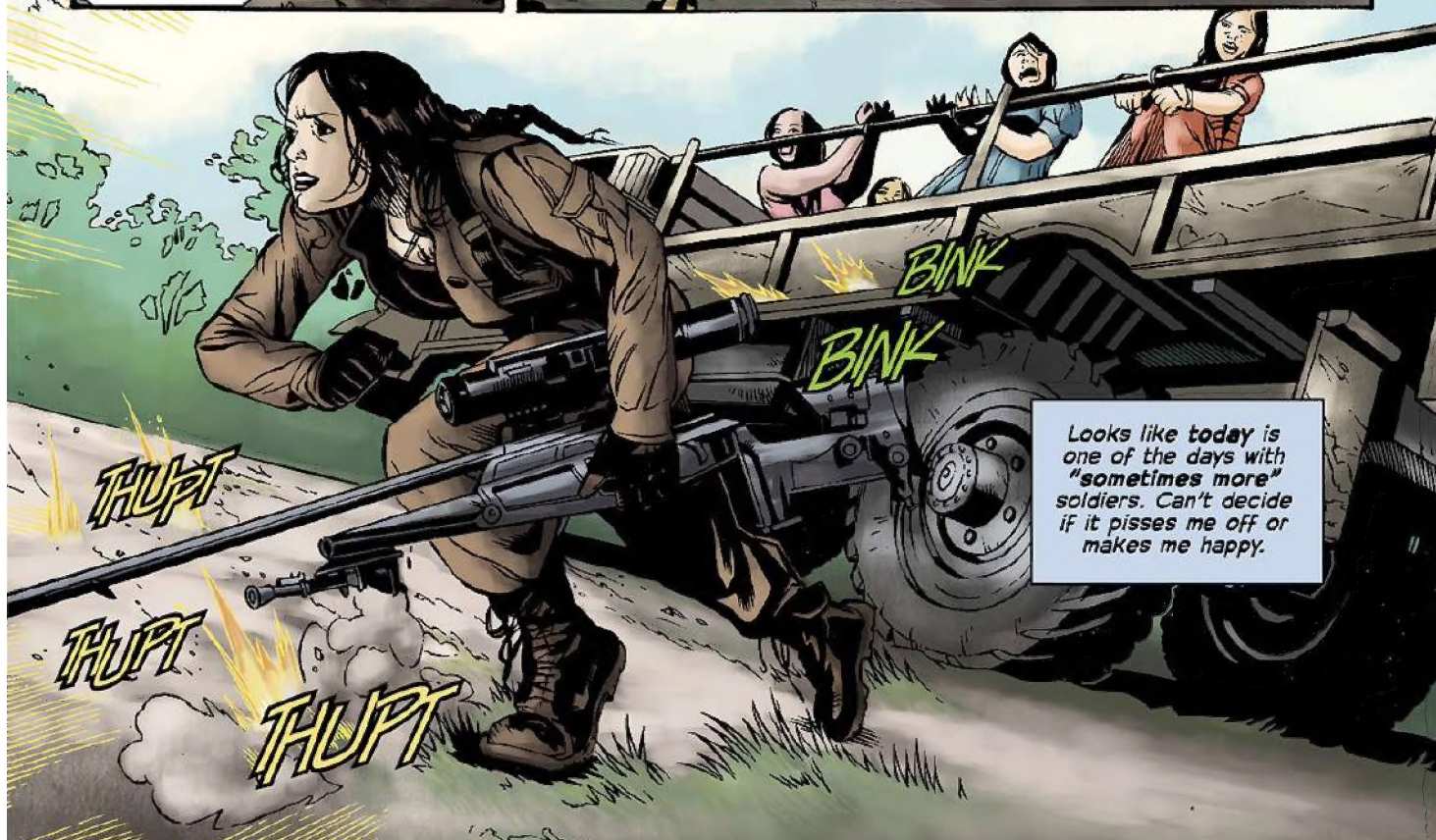
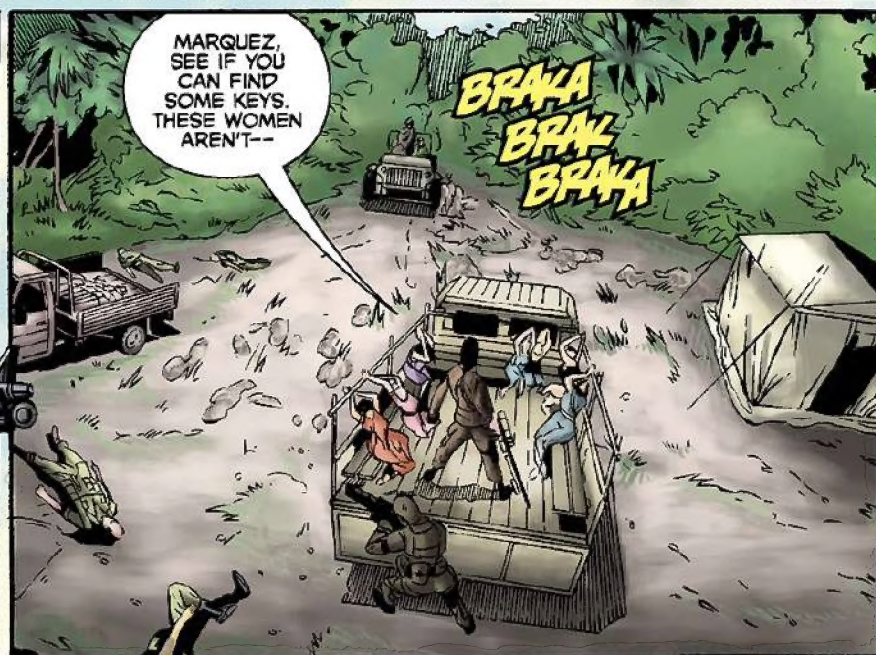


Keeping society within its proper guidelines.

THUKT



Elevating moral standards.



On one hand, I'm pleased to eliminate men such as these. Men who have made the wrong decisions.



On the other hand, I took this Guatemalan mission as an excuse to come here and discover...

...something else.

DON'T KILL ME! AAAHH!



Here in this jungle, some years ago, something very odd happened. I've read the debriefing, and it's... it's quite strange.



HAH! YOU HEAR HER SCREAM? SHE IS AFRAID!

ALL WOMEN ARE COWARDS!

Archuletta and I came here to learn the truth.



HER JACKET? WHY IS--?



BECAUSE
NOT EVERY
WOMAN WHO
SCREAMS IS
AFRAID.

CRACK CRACK

Sometimes she's
just distracting you.



Giving you
what you
expect to
see.

A woman who
runs. A scream.
Her clothes on
a branch.

You focus too
much on those
things, and
everything else
becomes invisible.



I need to
get back to
the camp.

Bollo and Abe are
there, and though
they're a hundred
times the soldiers
that Alvaro's men
are, they might
be in trouble.

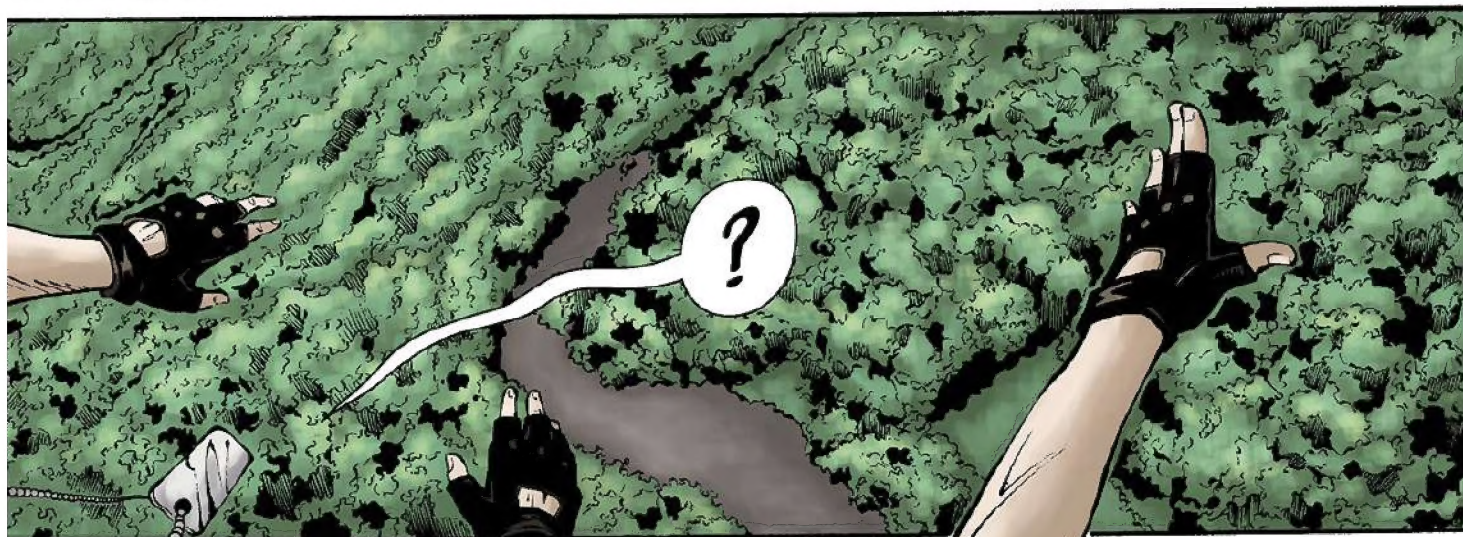
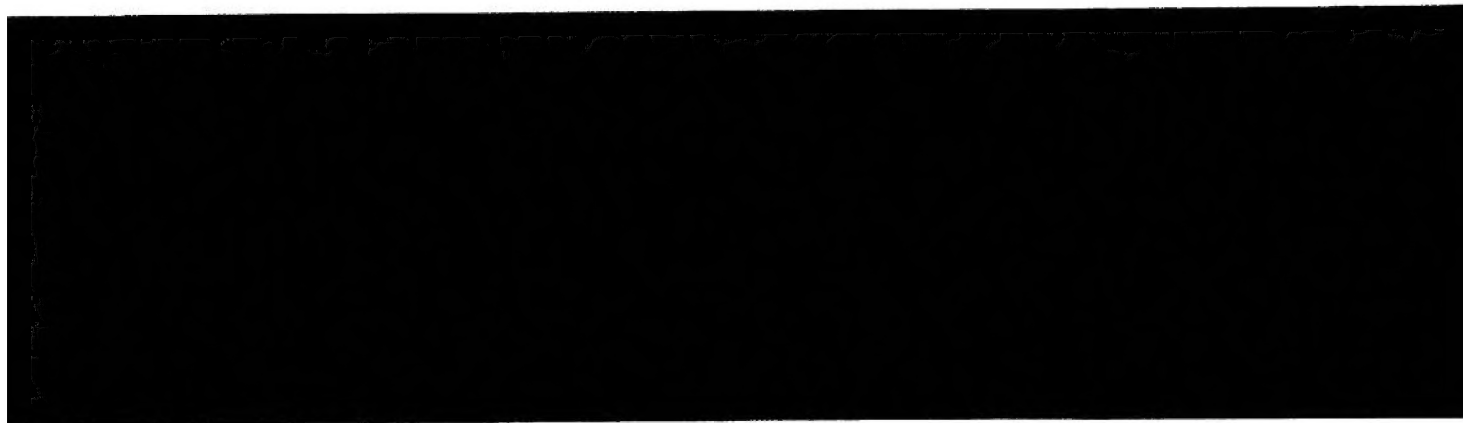


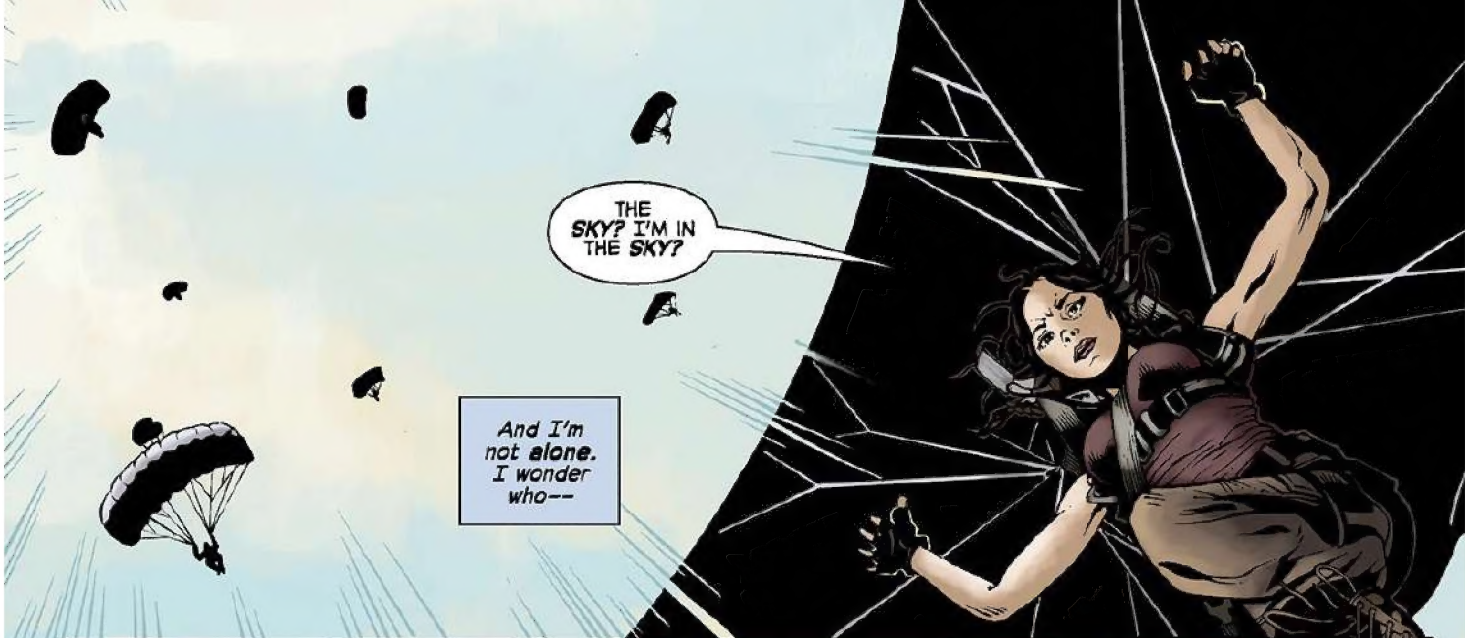
I can't
let these
men down.

Not like...
Archuletta.









THE
SKY? I'M IN
THE SKY?

And I'm
not alone.
I wonder
who--



First things
first, Isabelle.



Good. Didn't
get caught up.
Didn't get
impaled.

TIME TO
HIDE THE
CHUTE?



No. Just move away.
I saw **seven** others
coming down. Maybe
more already on the
ground. **Friends?**
Enemies?

WHERE
THE HELL
AM I?



THIS ISN'T
ANY JUNGLE
I KNOW.

The trees. The plants.
Even the feel of the
jungle. I thought I'd
been to **every** jungle
in the world, but...
never **this** one.



And who is that?

WHAT THE HELL?



SWOOSH

Another one!



GOD-DAMN IT!

GOD! DAMN! IT!



Interesting. They don't seem to know each other. And it looks like there's going to be a killing. My money is on the--



THWUMP



I should kill these people. I should kill them right now. I was always taught, as a sniper, to beat the bullet.



There are two ways to beat the bullet. The first is to kill your targets, all your targets, before they can react.



And the second way is to be gone before any survivors can act in response. There are only three of them. If I take them right now--

WHERE ARE WE?

MAYBE SHE KNOWS.

He knew I--? Damn it!



I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS JUNGLE. AND I'VE SEEN MOST.

Just have to hope I'm better off with a team. And I've got a bad history there.

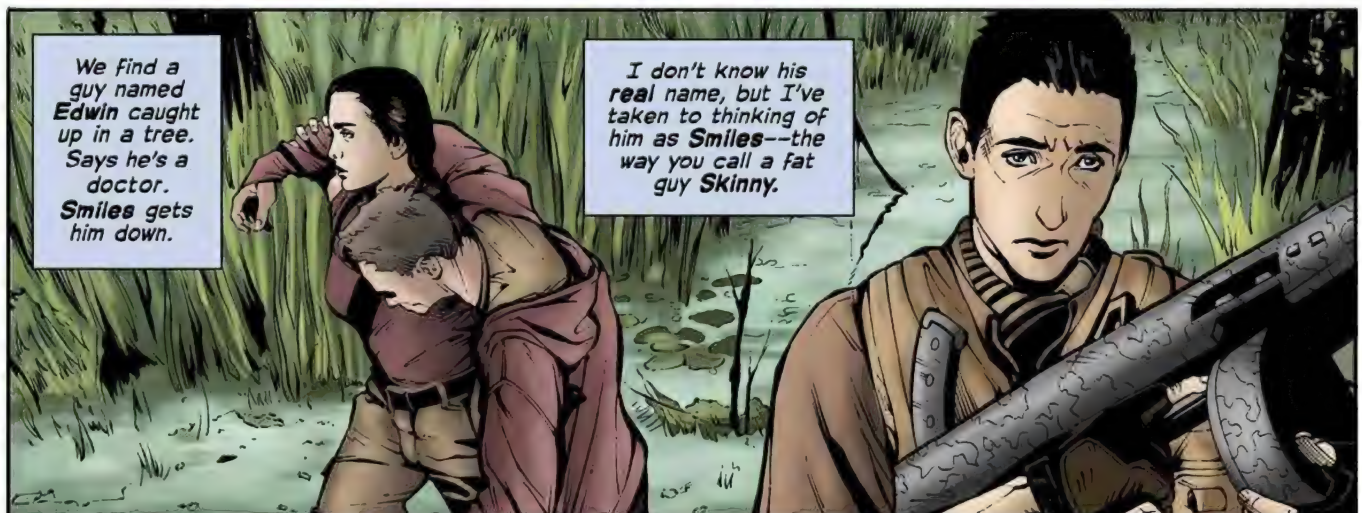
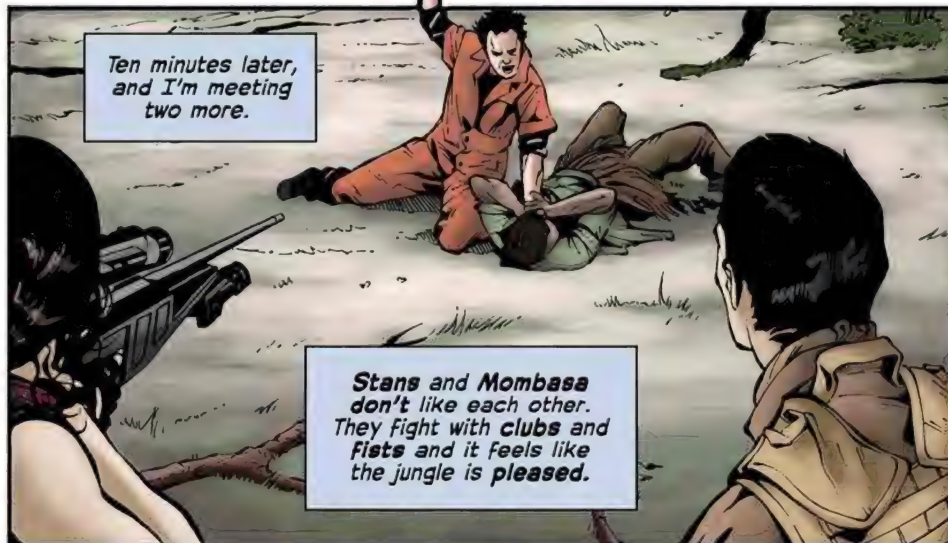
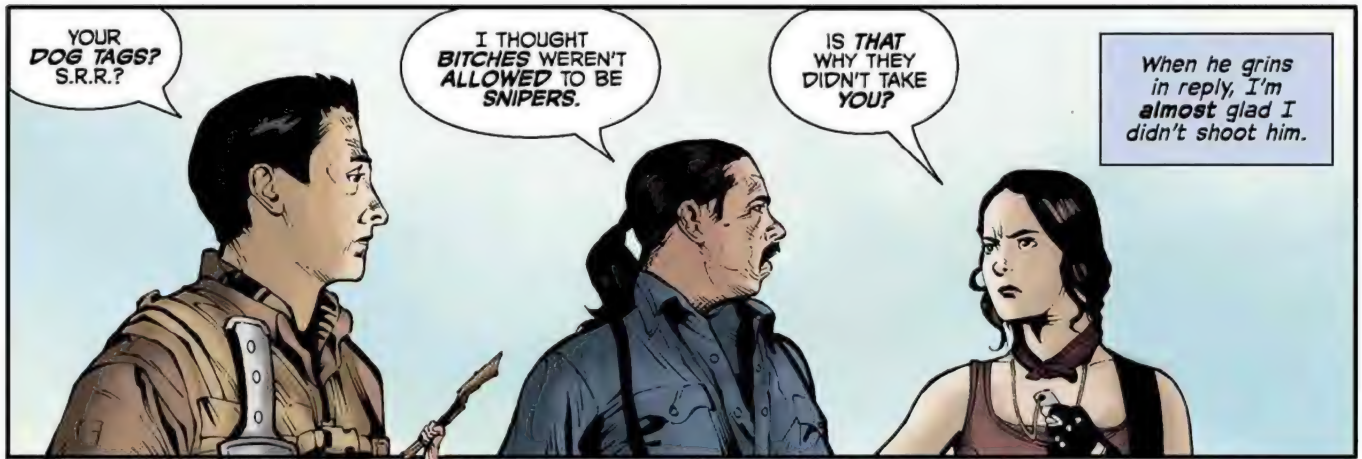


YOU REMEMBER A PLANE?

WOKE UP IN FREEFALL. YOU?

SAME.







It's only a short hike until we find Parachute Passenger Number Seven, standing right next to--

--What in the hell?



WHO THE HELL IS THIS GUY?

GOD... WHAT IS THIS PLACE?



WHO WOULD DO THIS?

WHOEVER THEY ARE... THEY TAKE TROPHIES.



***Trophies.** I'm starting to suspect that's why we're here. We're meant to be hunted. These men, their familiarity with weapons, their attitudes... These men are killers. Like me.*

And someone took us--easily. Not a pretty thought.



And me as the only woman. If we somehow get stranded in this place, I get automatically elected as Eve.



Not at all good.

WHAT IF WE ARE DEAD?



THIS IS HELL.

LAST I CHECKED, YOU DON'T NEED A PARACHUTE TO GET THERE.



And they don't let you keep your guns, either.



The boys all put their balls back in the right place, and we move on.



Whoever wants to hunt us...they should have remembered, if you hunt killers, they'll come after you.

And Hanzo, our Killer number seven, finds us some fresh tracks. Maybe they'll lead us to something I can goddamn shoot.



At least it gives us a starting point.

Silly, though.

Nowhere to go, but we're all so eager to get there.

Anything to get out of the doghouse and into the hunt.



And everyone triggers more traps.



It's like the whole damn forest is attacking us. Swinging logs. Spiked balls. Makeshift spears.



And the jungle drops out from under me.

NO!



THAP



Then, just like that, the jungle quiets down. It's had its say, for now. I've spent enough time in the jungle to know it's a bitch, though, and it won't stay silent for long. At least we find the man who set the traps.



DEAD TWO WEEKS, JUDGING BY THE RATE OF DECOMPOSITION.

HE TOOK UP POSITION HERE. SHOOTING IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THIS WAS HIS LAST STAND.

THESE TRAPS WEREN'T MEANT FOR US. HE WAS HUNTING SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING A LOT BIGGER.



WHAT KIND OF WEAPON DOES THIS?

I tell them we should bury the dead. They don't even answer.

I'm a little relieved. He wasn't one of us, and I don't want to become one of him.

Still...I'm glad I said something. Just the act of saying the dead should be buried is like a little prayer.

That prayer lasts me until we reach high ground, where I see that my prayers won't be answered.

WE'RE GONNA NEED A NEW PLAN.

SOMETHING'S COMING.

This alien jungle is breathing lower, watching us, and something big is coming through the trees.

Pounding footsteps. Snapping branches. Deep, heavy panting. We all hear the noise. It's coming fast and hungry.

WEAPONS! NOW!

None of us can breathe.

Whatever's coming, it sounds huge and fast and I want it dead. I want it dead so bad. We are eight heavily armed killers on an alien planet and we want to kill something.

Show yourself, dead thing.



RAAH
RAAH
RAAH

BRAKKA
BRAKKA
BRAKKA

DIE,
BASTARD!
DIE!



IT'S NOT
GOING
DOWN!

KEEP FIRING!
EVERYTHING
GOES DOWN!
EVERYTHING
DIES!

BRAK BRAKKA BRAK



RUN!

BRAK

BRAK

BRAK

BRAK

BRAK

It's true.

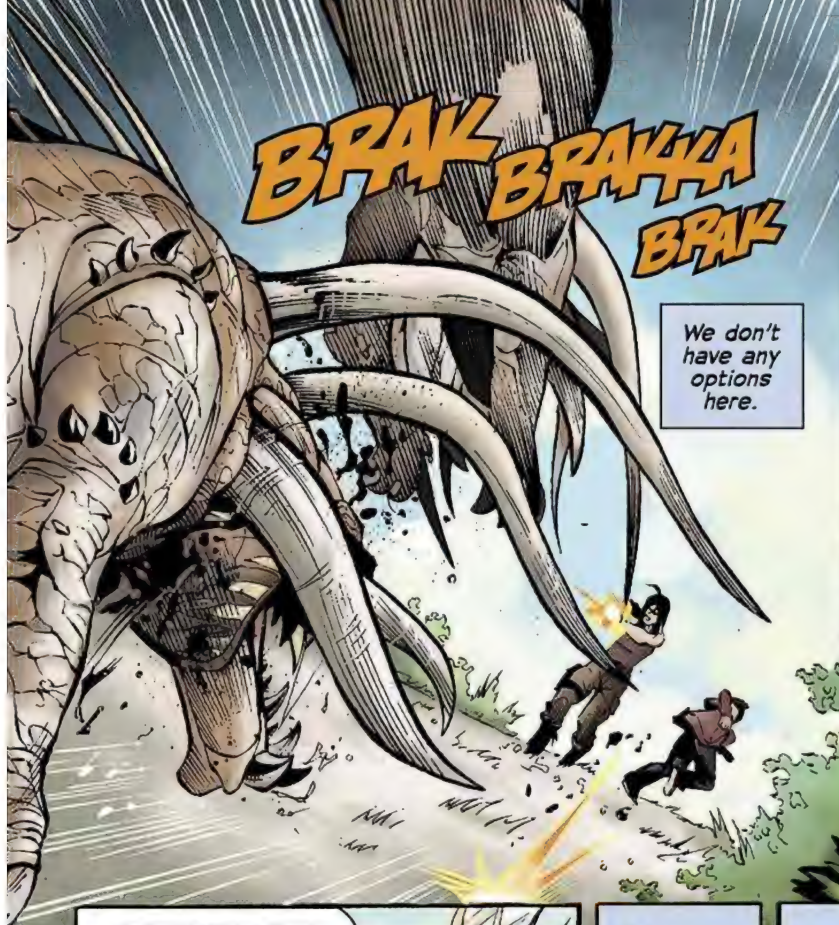
But there are more of them,
coming from everywhere.
We die next.



Running isn't the right
thing to do. But there is
no right thing to do.

BRAK

BRAK



We don't have any options here.

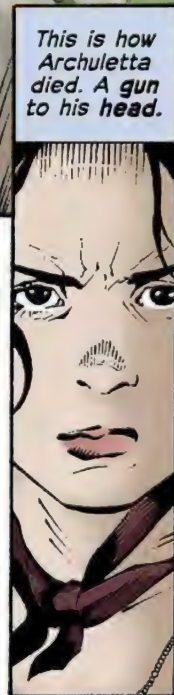


Can't kill it!

One bullet--



SCREW YOU, FIDO!
I WON'T GIVE YOU THE
SATISFACTION!



This is how Archuleta died. A gun to his head.



Except he didn't go out clean. He went out looking for me to save him. And I didn't. Now the gun is at my head and it's all I deserve and--



FWEEEEE
A WHISTLE?



And just like that... the dogs leave me and my one bullet.



THEY JUST... LEFT?

NO. THE WHISTLE. THEY WERE CALLED.

WHAT? CALLED? WILL SOMEBODY PLEASE TELL ME WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?



WE'RE BEING HUNTED. WE WERE ALL BROUGHT HERE FOR THE SAME PURPOSE.

THIS PLANET IS A GAME PRESERVE. AND WE'RE THE GAME.



THE DOGS WERE FLUSHING US OUT. THEY SPLIT US APART WHILE THEIR MASTER WATCHED. LEARNING OUR MOVES.

It's something I already felt, but to hear him say it...? That's different.

For the first time, the jungle feels cold and... wait. Where's---



THERE ARE ONLY SEVEN OF US.

Mombasa barely says this before we're in motion, searching.



And we find the Mexican in a clearing and it's a trap and I know it and I still can't help myself. I start to go for him.

IT'S A TRAP.

HELP ME.





He was dead. I killed him, but something used his voice. I think I know what that means. I get a half hour of hoping I'm wrong as we move through the jungle.



A CAMP?

YES. THE HUNTERS' BASE. THERE IS DANGER HERE.

I don't care. I just want to be anyplace where I'm not hearing a dead man's voice.



Oh...CRAP
CRAP I'M SO
GLAD I CAME
HERE.



Skinned carcasses.
Good to know we're
not the only things
being hunted.

At least we're
alone. There's
nobody here.





WHAT
THE HELL
IS THAT
THING?



I think...I think I could
answer him. The report I
read. Guatemala. The
Special Forces team.



IS...
IT...?



RAAH!

I know what's
happening to us,
and it is very
bad news.

WE
NEED TO
LEAVE.

WHERE'S
MR. TOUGH
GUY?

...He
was just...
here?







Then he comes
charging out of
the woods. I
thought they'd
gotten him. But
he was...hiding?



Firing into
the ground?
But...?



Yes! Dust!
There!
Something
we can--



KILL
IT!



Damn it!

The sand
is settling!
Already
hard to see
the damn
thing!

Damn it! It's one creature! One damn creature! And it's facing us all down!

SHOOT FOR THE MUZZLE FLASHES!

Bullets bounce. Armor.

TNK
TNK

YOU CAN'T BE INVISIBLE AND BULLETPROOF!

YOU CHEATING BASTARD!

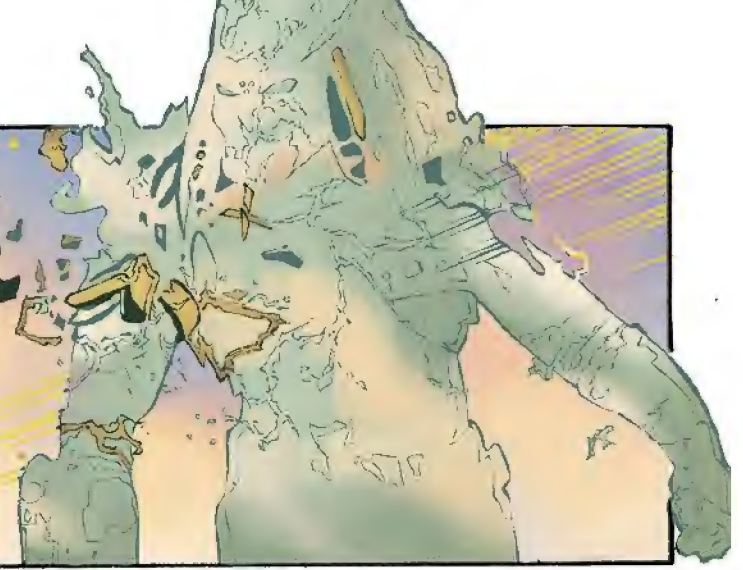
COVER! TAKE COVER!

I hardly have to tell it to the doctor.

Why's he even here anyway? Why was he chosen for this hunt?

Why not another man
like him? Another killer?

F-THOOM



YES! GOOD
MY FRIEND!
WE HAVE THIS
BASTARD
BLEEDING!

AND
NOW...



**NZZN
TZZN**



LET NIKOLAI
SHOW YOU HOW
TO MAKE THE
SKIES TURN
RED!

**CHUTTA
CHUTTA CHUTTA**



UNHHH!

SPRAKT

ZOOOM





We're covering our panic with weapons fire. We have to keep pressuring our hunters. Make them know we can still bite. We can all keep our heads in the game.



All except Edwin. He clings to me like a baby. Cries like one, too.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE!





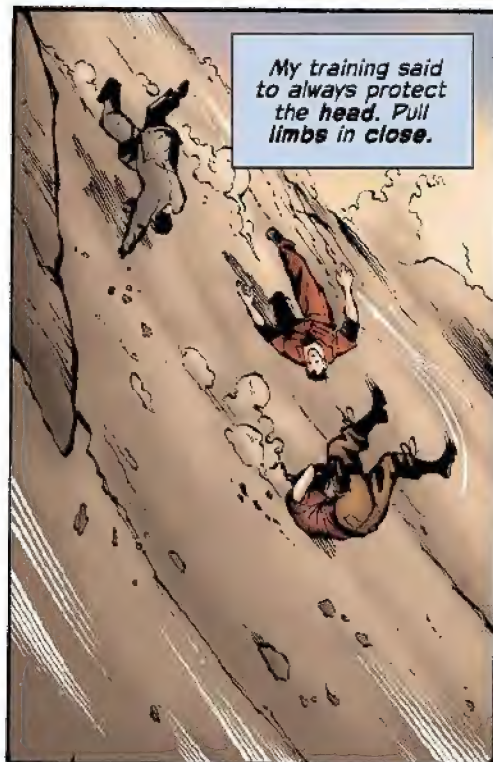
KEEP
RUNNING!
WE NEED
DISTANCE!

We need
a lot of
things.
We need
bigger
guns.

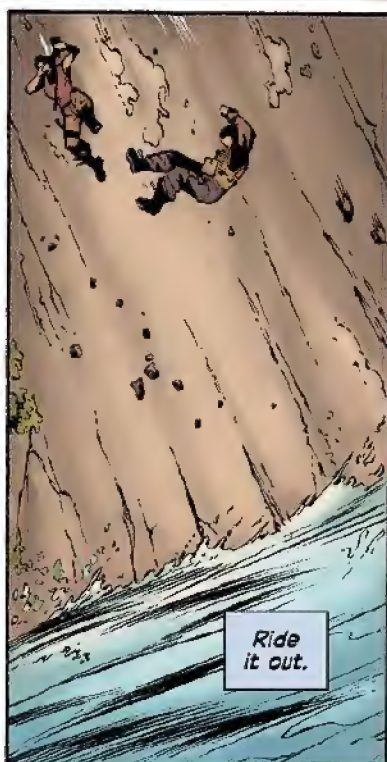


Smaller enemies.
Ones we can see
and that don't—

Oh damn.



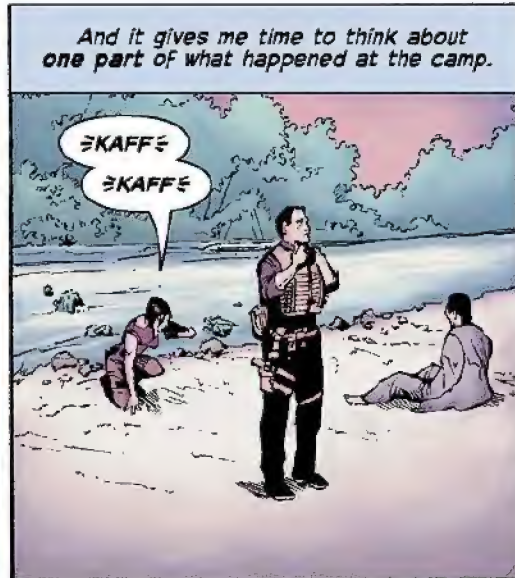
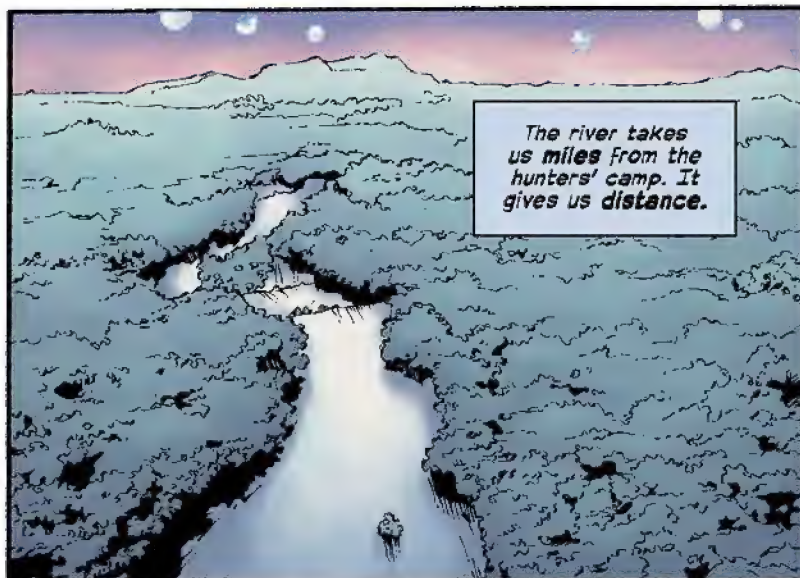
My training said
to always protect
the head. Pull
limbs in close.



Ride
it out.



SPLASH







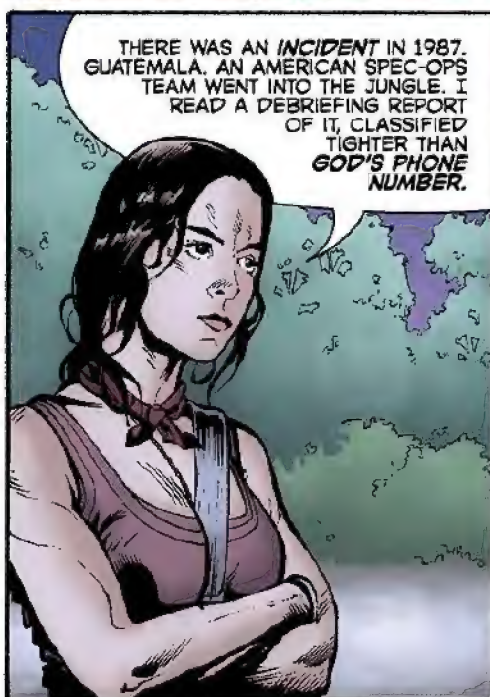
Oh, JESUS,
YOU DO.

START
TALKING.



THERE IS...I...
WE DON'T HAVE
A NAME FOR
THEM.

JUST A
SPOOK STORY
YOU HEAR
AROUND THE
CAMPFIRE.



THERE WAS AN INCIDENT IN 1987.
GUATEMALA. AN AMERICAN SPEC-OPS
TEAM WENT INTO THE JUNGLE. I
READ A DEBRIEFING REPORT
OF IT, CLASSIFIED
TIGHTER THAN
**GOD'S PHONE
NUMBER.**

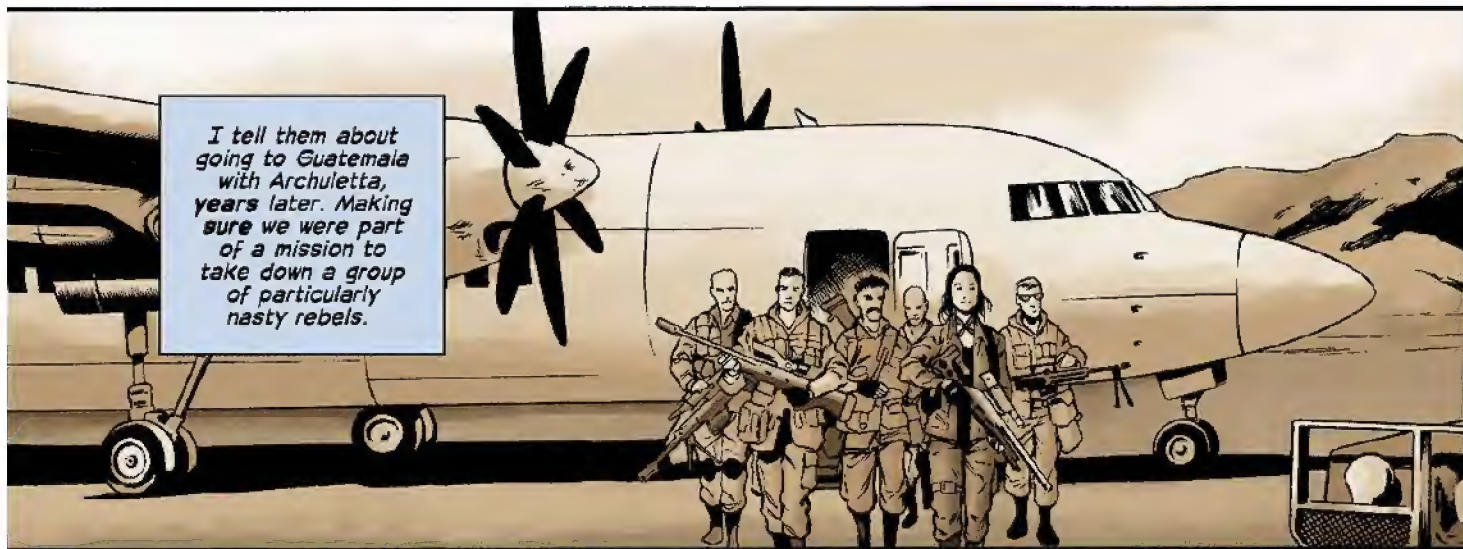


"IT HUNTED
THEM. THIS...
CREATURE DID.
INVISIBLE IN
OUR SPECTRUM.
RELENTLESS.
A KILLER.
A TRUE
PREDATOR."



There's no reason
not to tell them
everything.

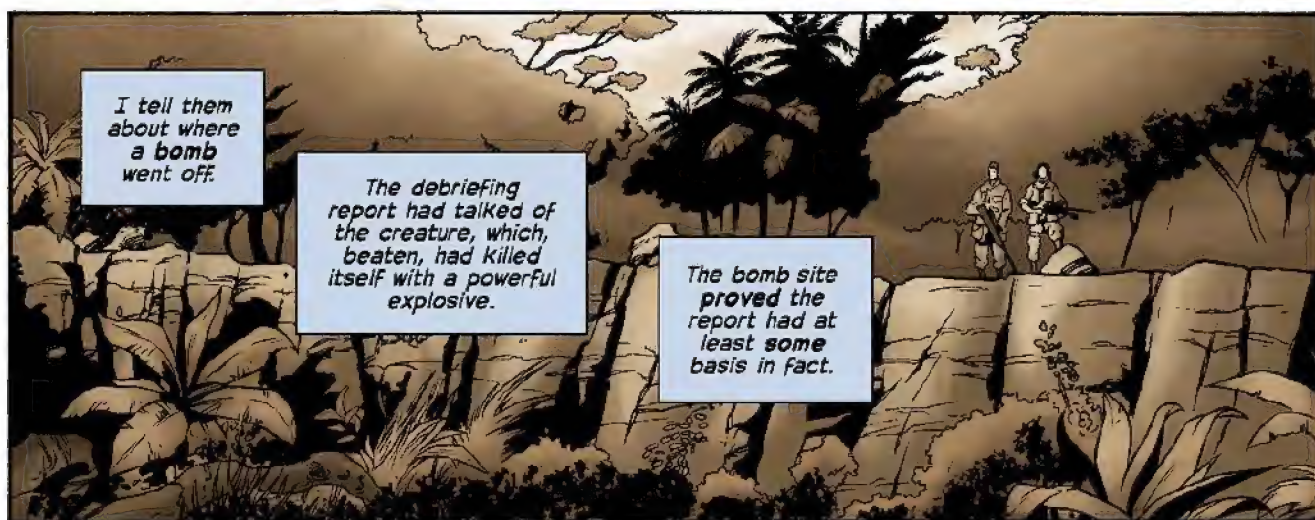
We're on an alien planet
and the creatures are
here and everything's fair
game, because we're the
game...we're the hunted.



I tell them about going to Guatemala with Archuletta, years later. Making sure we were part of a mission to take down a group of particularly nasty rebels.



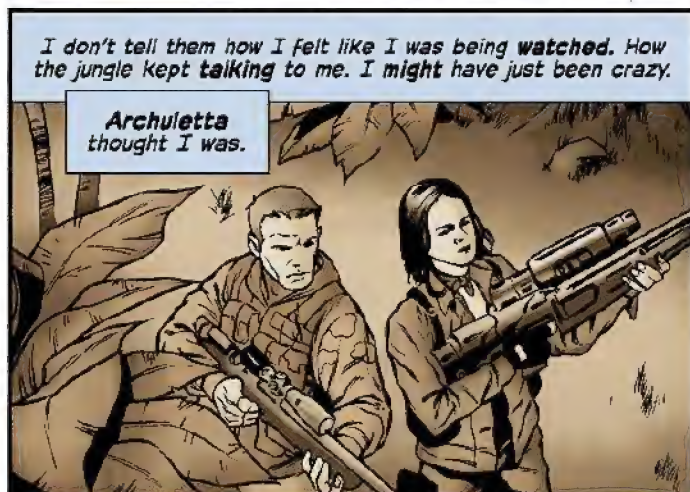
I tell them about expanding my mission. Searching for any clues of what had really happened. The debriefing report was hard to swallow. I thought possibly the jungle might tell me a different story.



I tell them about where a bomb went off.

The debriefing report had talked of the creature, which, beaten, had killed itself with a powerful explosive.

The bomb site proved the report had at least some basis in fact.



I don't tell them how I felt like I was being watched. How the jungle kept talking to me. I might have just been crazy.

Archuletta thought I was.



All up until the time when the rebels caught him.

*It was my fault.
Going off the
mission...sending
him out to look for
invisible things.*

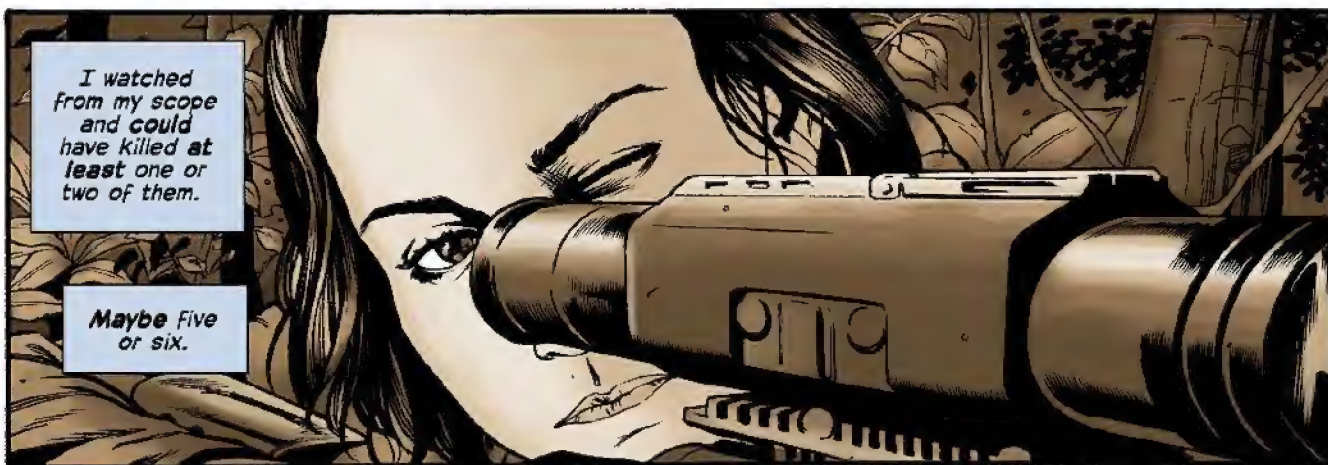
*He was the
best spotter
I've ever
known.*

*I was looking for
aliens, and forgot
to keep track of
the other horrors.*



*I watched
from my scope
and could
have killed at
least one or
two of them.*

*Maybe Five
or six.*

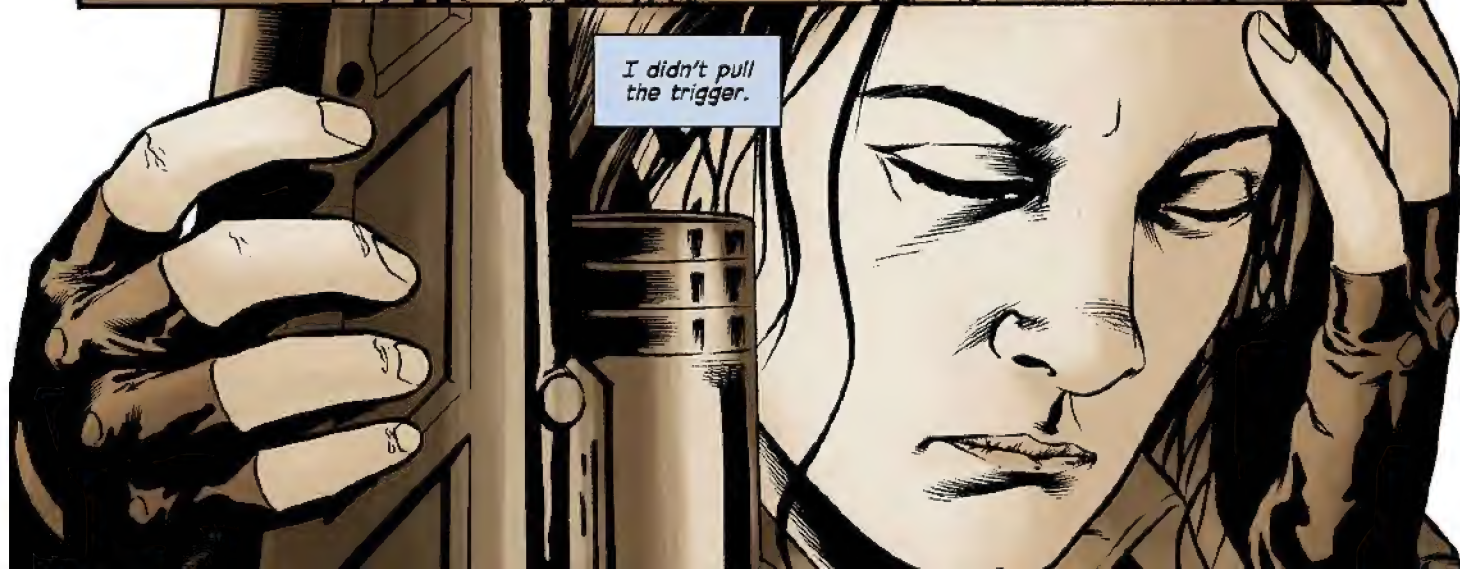


*But there
were at
least twenty
of them,
and if I'd
pulled the
trigger,
even once,
there was
no way
I could
have made
it out alive...*

*I told
myself that
he would
have wanted
it that way.*



*I didn't pull
the trigger.*





*But I don't
tell them.
I just tell
them enough
about
everything
else.*

*Enough that we're still
a team. Or at least
not enemies.*



*I laughed
at these
men when
they were
scared
we were in
hell, but I
have just
such
ridiculous
thoughts.*



*I think
being on
this world
is my
karmic
debt.*



*I am here
on this world
for my sins.*

*Archuletta died
because I was
too busy looking
for aliens.*



*And now
the aliens are
looking for me.*

The **dark** doesn't bring us any relief from the heat.

Even at night, the jungle is sticky and hot.

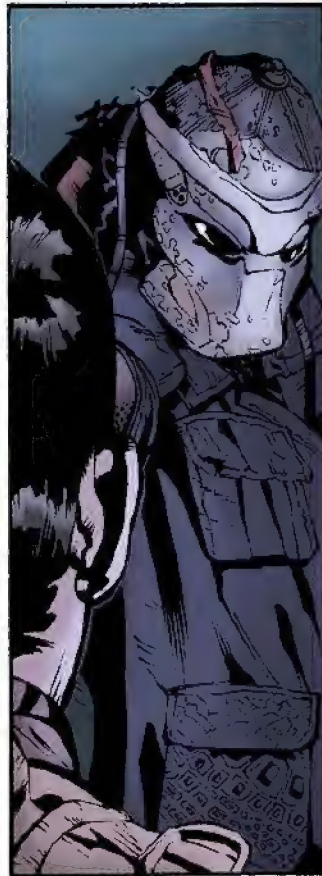
Can't get over how he's the **oddball**. Nikolai. Stans. Hanzo. Smiles. Their easy **confidence** with weapons, and fighting...They can take care of themselves.

I'M FREAKIN' **BURNING UP!** I WANT SOME DAMN **WATER. AND PIZZA.** JESUS. SOME **PIZZA.**

His name is **Edwin** and I've been watching him.

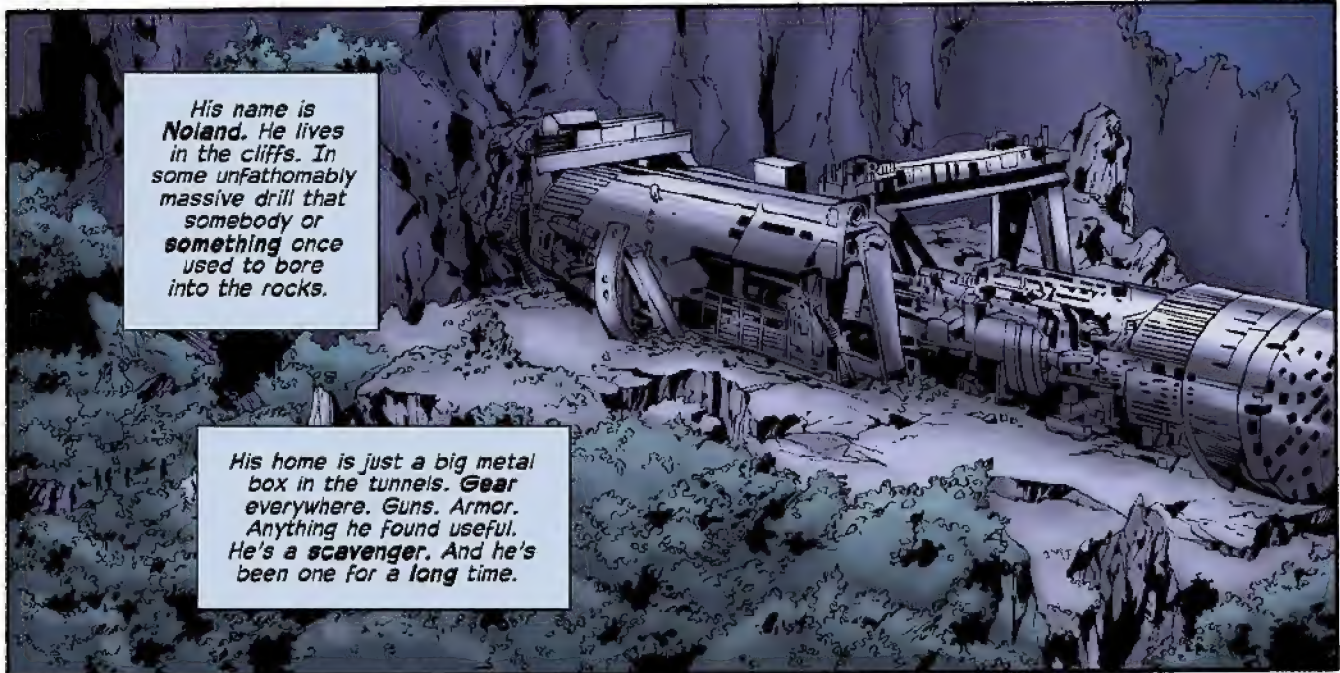
But Edwin...I halfway expect him to call me **Mom**. Why did our hunters choose him? Because he's a **doctor**? Doesn't make **sense**. We're all trained to deal with wounds in the field.

WE NEED TO **MAKE CAMP**. SET UP A **PERIMETER**. TAKE STOCK OF WHAT WE HAVE. GET **PREPARED** BEFORE THEY...





FOLLOW ME
IF YOU'D LIKE
TO **STAY** THAT
WAY.



His name is **Noland**. He lives in the cliffs. In some unfathomably massive drill that somebody or **something** once used to bore into the rocks.

His home is just a big metal box in the tunnels. **Gear** everywhere. **Guns**. **Armor**. Anything he found useful. He's a **scavenger**. And he's been one for a long time.



HOW
HAVE YOU
SURVIVED?



BY SALVAGING WHAT I
CAN, WHEN I CAN,
FROM **WHATEVER**
I CAN.

YEAH. KEEPS
ME **INVISIBLE**.
BLOCKS MY
BODY HEAT.

YOU'VE
GOT THEIR
ARMOR.

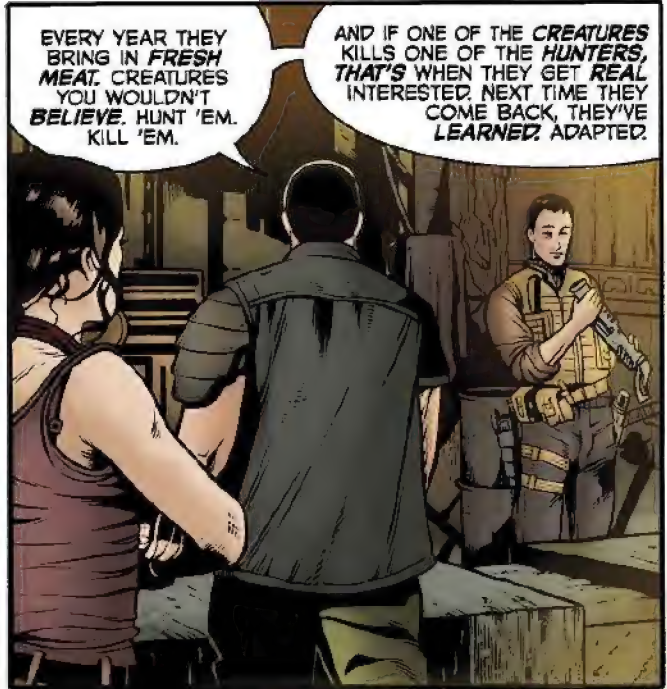


SO YOU
KILLED
ONE.

NOT HARDLY. THE
OTHERS GOT HIM
FIRST. **TWO** BREEDS
OF PREDATORS OUT
THERE. LIKE **DOGS**
AND **WOLVES**. **CLAN**
AGAINST **CLAN**.



THEY FIGHT
EACH OTHER.
BUT THEY
HUNT...OTHER
THINGS. LIKE
US.



EVERY YEAR THEY
BRING IN *FRESH*
MEAT. CREATURES
YOU WOULDN'T
BELIEVE. HUNT 'EM.
KILL 'EM.

AND IF ONE OF THE *CREATURES*
KILLS ONE OF THE *HUNTERS*,
THAT'S WHEN THEY GET *REAL*
INTERESTED. NEXT TIME THEY
COME BACK, THEY'VE
LEARNED. ADAPTED.



CHANGED
THEIR
WEAPONS,
TACTICS,
ARMOR.

THEY ARE
TRYING TO MAKE
THEMSELVES
INTO BETTER
KILLERS.



IT'S
WORKING.



YOU SAID
THEY *COME*
BACK.
HOW?

A *SHIP*. IT'S
JUST NORTH
OF THEIR
CAMP.

NOW...IF YOU
DON'T MIND, I'M
TIRED. GOING TO BED.
NO LOUD NOISES.
THEY'RE *OUT THERE*.
THEY'RE *ALWAYS*
OUT THERE.





And after
all the
noise...we
go silent.

Silent
enough to
hear the
gas.

Silent enough
to hear Noland,
in the hall,
cursing us.

Silent enough
to hear Noland
shooting at
something.

Silent enough
to hear Edwin
praying.

And plasma
weapons fire
outside the
door.

Silent
enough to
hear Noland
start screaming.
That doesn't
last long. Gets
cut off. Still
echoes, though.
He could have
been our best
ally, but we're
getting each
other killed.

Something slams
into the door.
Unbelievably strong.

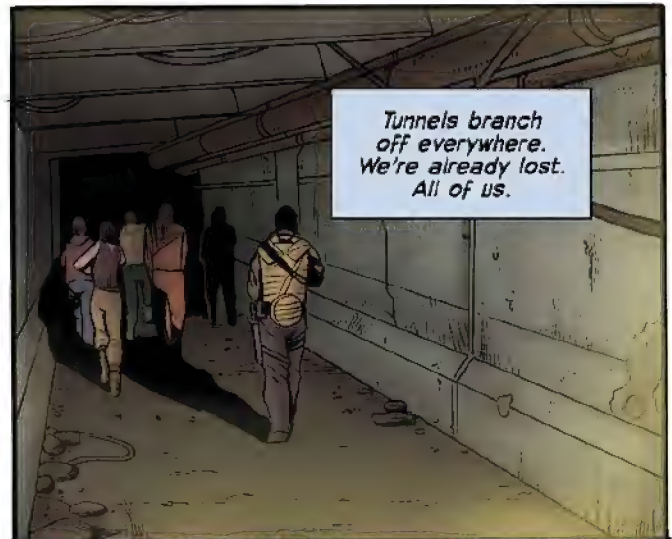
The rivets pop.
It happens two
times, then three.

Then...even
though we're all
so silent...we
don't hear
anything.

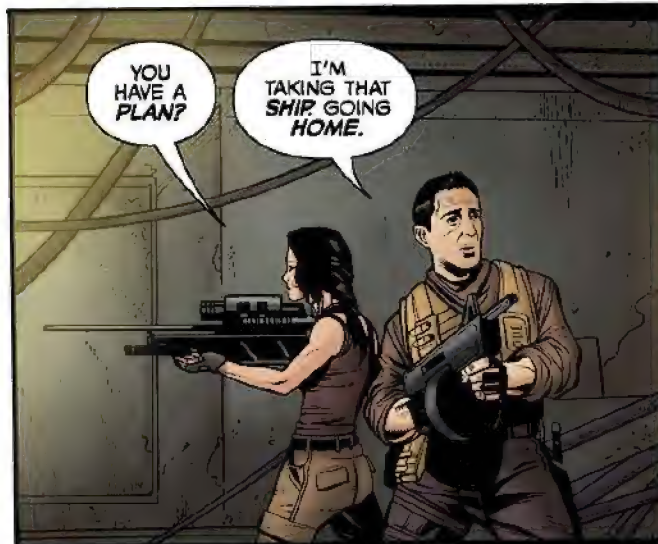


IS IT...
GONE?

PROBABLY NOT
GONE. JUST GIVING
US A CHANCE TO
RUN. BETTER
HUNTING THAT
WAY.

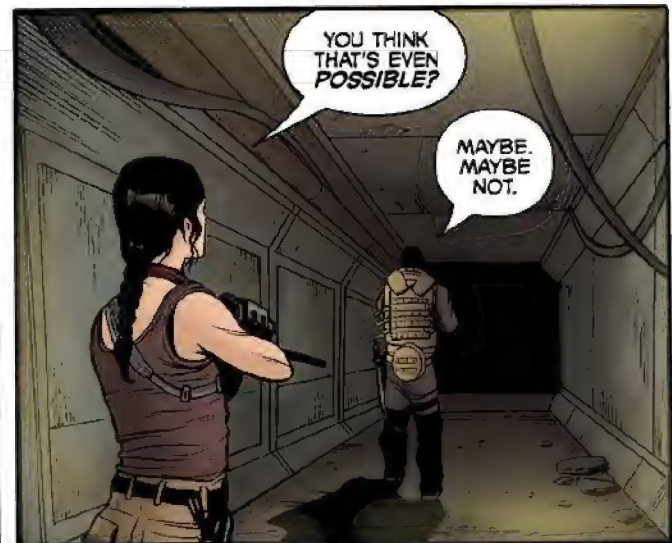


Tunnels branch
off everywhere.
We're already lost.
All of us.



YOU
HAVE A
PLAN?

I'M
TAKING THAT
SHIP GOING
HOME.



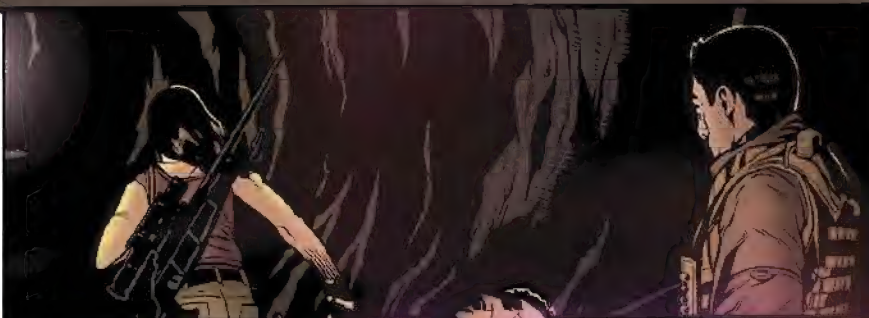
YOU THINK
THAT'S EVEN
POSSIBLE?

MAYBE.
MAYBE
NOT.



"WHAT'S THAT
MATTER?"

The metal hallways
turn to stone.
We're lost, but
going up seems to
be the smartest
course. It's
inevitable we get
separated.
It's too dark.
Too frantic.



Edwin
gets lost
and
Nikolai
goes back
to find him,
and I'm
wondering
about
every glint
of--

NIKOLAI!

AHHH!

ZWONT

Plasma round!
The creature's
still here.
Still hunting.

Then...darkness
again, but noises from
everywhere and--



RUN! RUN!
RUN!

IS
NIKOLAI...?

THAT
THING HAS
HIM, BUT HE HAS
CLAYMORES
AND--

KRAKA-BOOM







DAMN.



WHO DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE
DEALING
WITH?



とどろ
ろろろろろ

I KILLED
FORTY-TWO
PEOPLE ACROSS
THREE STATES AND
TWO OF THEM
WERE BIGGER
THAN YOU!



MY NAME
IS **STANS!** SAY
MY NAME!



SAY MY
GODDAMN
NAME!

GO!
GO!!

And
we go.



We don't get far before we hear the shots. But we get far enough.



We have some distance now. Stans was a killer, but he gave his life for us. So I do say his name.



STANS.

I say it quiet, because the other hunters are coming for us.

HOW LONG UNTIL...?



NOT LONG ENOUGH. WE KILLED ONE OF THEM. THEY'RE GONNA BE COMING STRAIGHT AT US NOW.

He walks us through every possible trick to lose the hunters.

At first we stay on the bedrock.

STEP WHERE I STEP. DO WHAT I DO.

LET'S GET TO THAT SHIP.

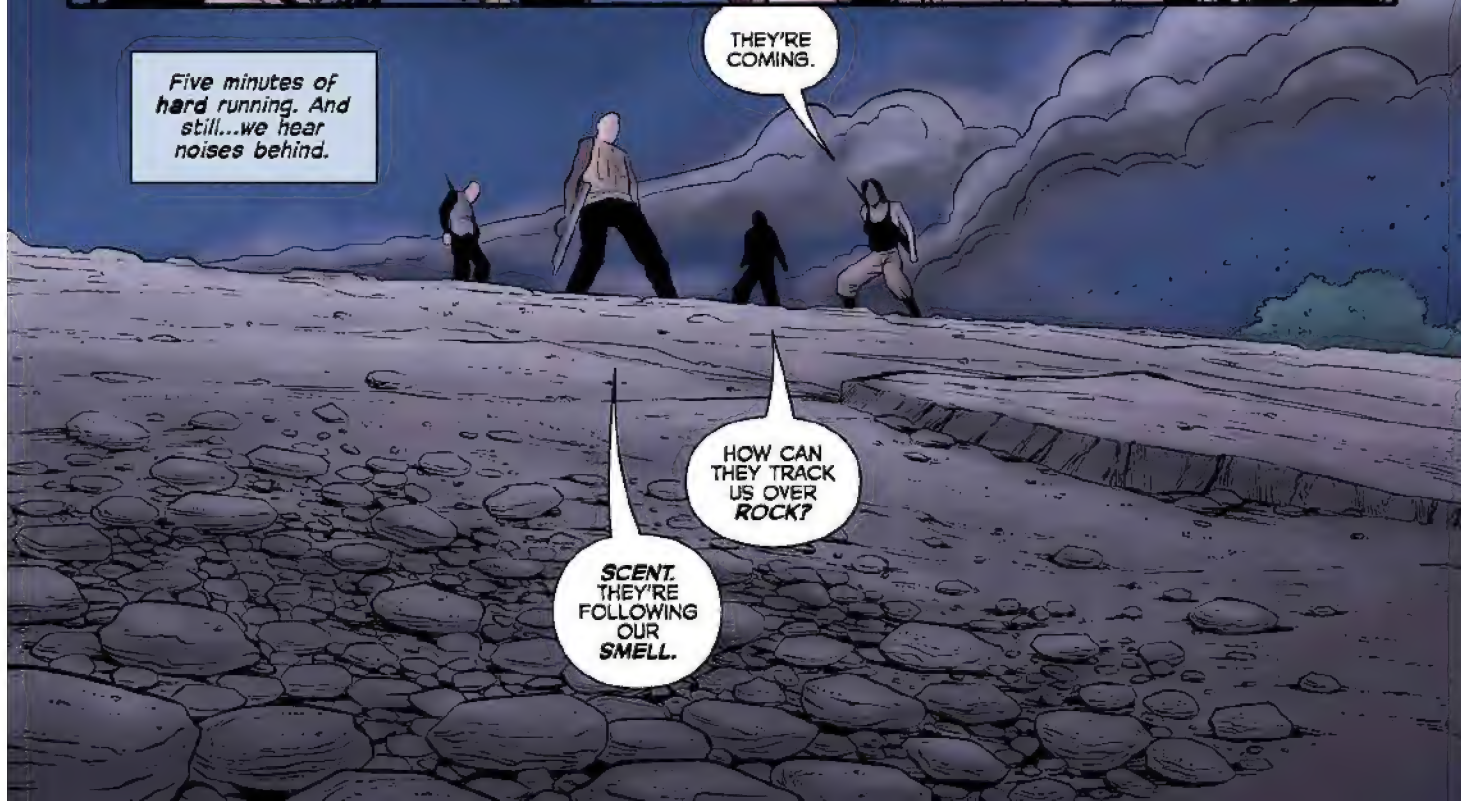


Five minutes of hard running. And still...we hear noises behind.

THEY'RE COMING.

HOW CAN THEY TRACK US OVER ROCK?

SCENT. THEY'RE FOLLOWING OUR SMELL.





And then it's a swamp to mask our scents and our heat signatures. We do everything we can, and the goddamn relentless bastards are still coming. We're speeding through a field of tall grass when Hanzo stops.

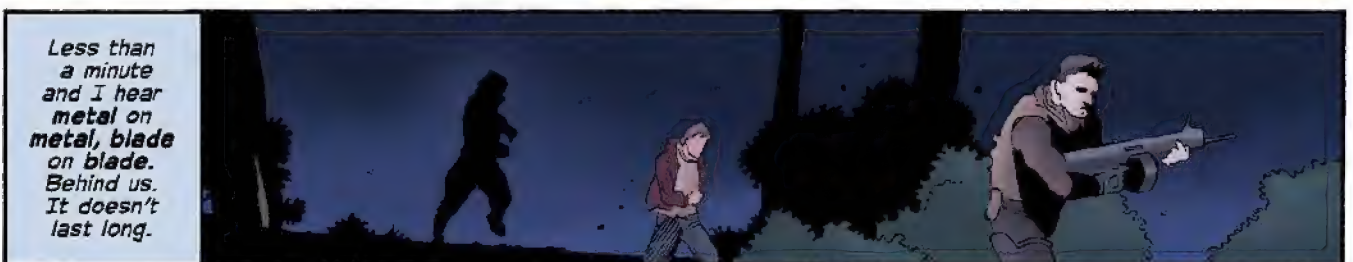
He nods at me. Keeps his feet planted.



And we move on without him.



Less than a minute and I hear metal on metal, blade on blade. Behind us. It doesn't last long.



I hope Hanzo had a good death. And I hope he took the hunters down with him, but we can't count on that, and we keep running.



Trying for that ship.







YOU SHOULD
HAVE GONE
WITH HIM.

I
KNOW.



We don't
see the
wire.

CLIKT

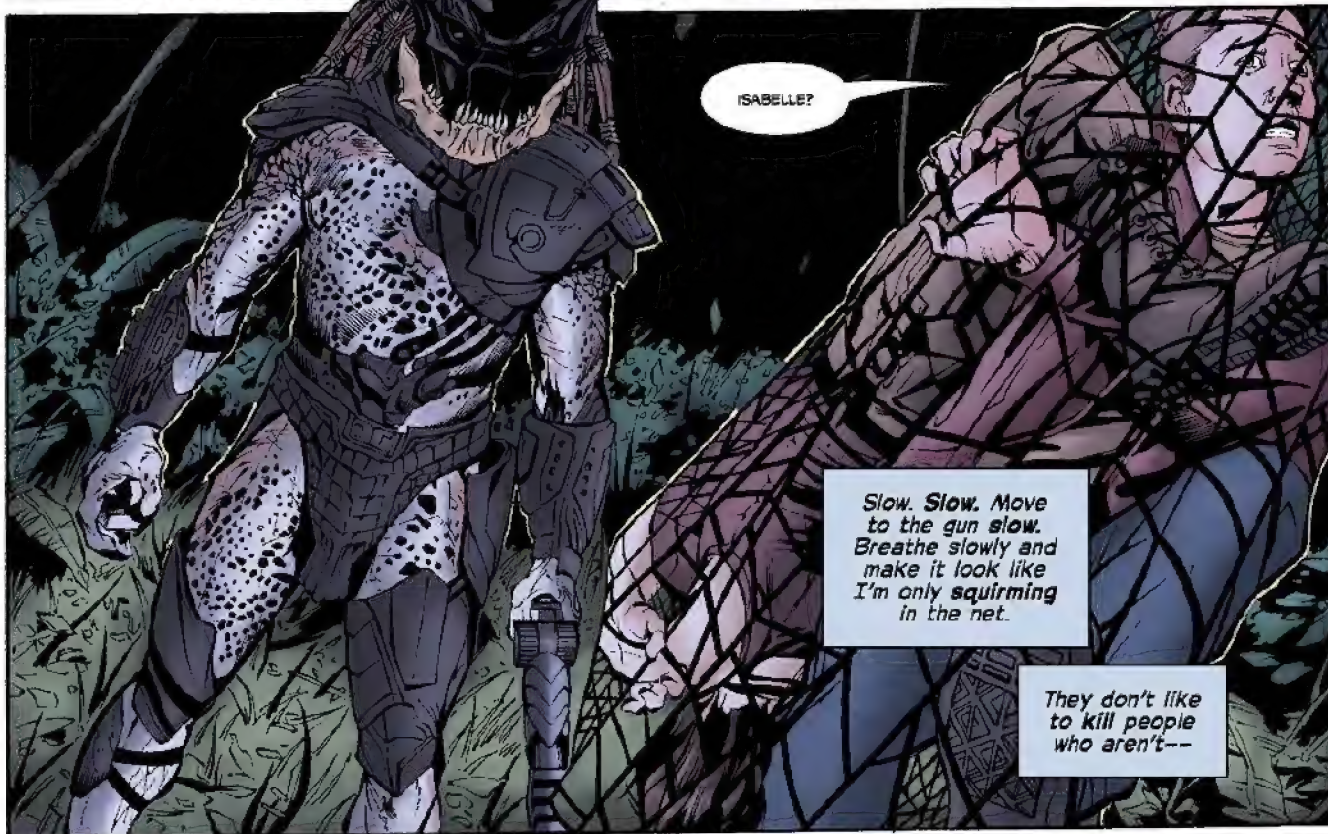


AHHH!

SWOOSH



Oh no.



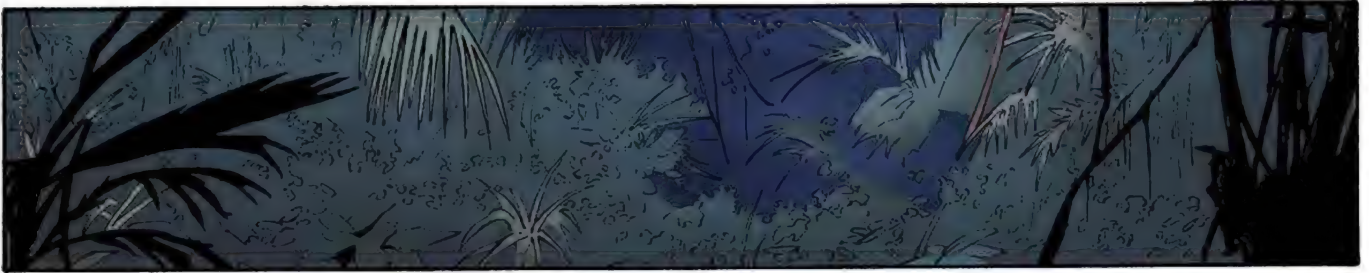
ISABELLE?

Slow. Slow. Move
to the gun slow.
Breathe slowly and
make it look like
I'm only squirming
in the net.

They don't like
to kill people
who aren't--



THWAK



The camp?
We're back in
the camp?

Of course.
The totem pole.
We're... trophies.



EDWIN.
WAKE UP.
EDWIN!



ISABELLE?
WHERE...?

IS THAT...
MOMBASA?

YES, AND
IT'S GOING TO
BE US UNLESS
WE CAN--



WHAT'S THE
NOISE?

IT--IT'S
THE SHIP

SSSS



He made it...





WHAT THE HELL?

SWFFT



WHAT ARE YOU...?

YEAH! THAT'S IT! FIGHT IT! THIS IS, LIKE, MY FAVORITE PART!



WHA...? WHY AM I SO... WEAK?

A NEUROTOXIN. SO MANY TO CHOOSE FROM AROUND HERE.



YOU LITTLE... YOU LITTLE... BITCH.

IT'S NOT FATAL. JUST PARALYZING.

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE... EVERYTHING.



NOW YOU KNOW WHY THE HUNTERS PICKED ME.

BECAUSE I HUNT, TOO.



A spaceship. An actual spaceship. My God. All of this is real.

I WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU. WATCHING YOU.



BUT YOU COULDN'T SEE ME FOR WHAT I REALLY AM.

That means he's gone. He made it.



GUESS THOSE THINGS
AREN'T THE **ONLY**
ONES WHO CAN
TURN **INVISIBLE**,
huh?

Feel...fuzzy.
Can't even
turn my head
to see...is
that a **knife**?



A **scalpel**.
Oh, hell.

BACK
HOME, I'M A
MURDERER.



A
FREAK.

The
neurotoxin...
it's...



I can feel
this. He's...
cutting me?



BUT IN
THIS PLACE,
AMONG THE
MONSTERS?



I'M
NORMAL.



Bad call,
Isabelle. Made
the wrong damn
call **again**.

I LIKE
IT HERE.

I WANT
TO **STAY**.



Chose the
wrong man.



Now I know how Archuletta felt. Handcuffed and down to nothing but hope.

His last hope was me... somewhere out in the jungle.



My only hope just took off in the other direction.



HELLO HELLO
HELLO! EDWIN
TO ISABELLE.
YOU THERE?

Oh, I'm
here.



I don't care
about my sins
and whether I
deserve this
or not--



--I want to
see you die.



I'M HOME,
DARLING. GOT
ANYTHING TO
EAT?



NO! Gotta let him know what really happened, but...mouth... won't...work!

IGGG EGGWNN!

YOU'LL BE OKAY.



I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D COME BACK, BUT SHE SAID YOU WOULD.

Turn around! Turn the hell AROUND!



YOU'RE A GOOD MAN AFTER ALL.

Please turn around.



NO.

I'M NOT.





FEEL ANY BETTER?

CAN...
MOVE...
SOME.



STAY HERE.
KEEP HIDDEN. I'LL
PROTECT—



He left
Edwin
alive.

But just
as bait.
Frozen.



Stuffed his
clothes with
explosives.

And one of
our hunters bit
the hook.

BE RIGHT
BACK.

I suppose the
way we used
Edwin should
bother me, but
it doesn't.



This planet has taught me that you have to choose your moments of compassion.



C'MON.

Just like, as a sniper, I choose the best time to take the shot. And the hell if I'm going to sit this one out. Can...start to move.



DON'T NEED MUCH MUSCLE TO PULL A TRIGGER.



Because...another thing about this planet.

About this fight.



I wasn't put here for redemption.

*Not to prove myself or to
pay a debt to Archuletta...*



*That debt
can't be paid.*

*I was put on this
planet to be hunted.
Or at least...that's the
hunter's perspective.*

*But my
perspective?*



*I was
put on
this
planet to
survive.
I can't
do that if
that thing
stays
alive, and
I can't
do it
if I'm
alone--*



*--so
to hell with
outracing the
consequences
of pulling the
trigger.*



*Only the bullet
has meaning.*



And I'm thinking, right now--



--that I'm
the bullet.

I shouldn't be the
one who's running.





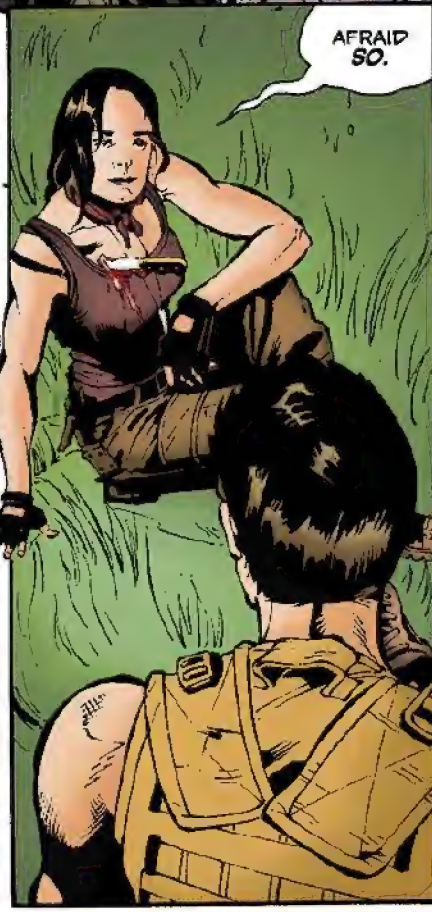
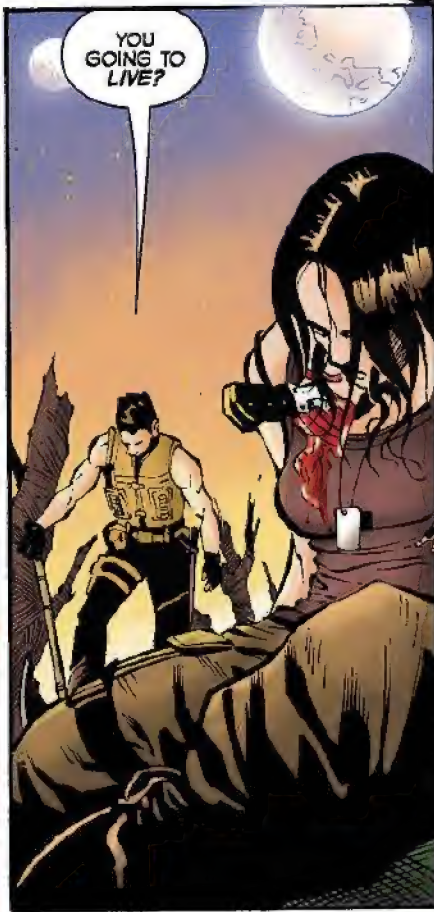
If I wasn't drugged--
that would have been
right between your--



--BASTARD.

--goddamn
cheating alien
eyes, you
miserable--







MY
NAME IS
ROYCE.

NICE
TO MEET
YOU.



I'M
ISABELLE.

≡UNNFF≡



SO,
WHAT NOW,
ROYCE?

WE SURVIVE.
WE KEEP GOING.
THAT'S ALL.

*His answer feels...
good. Clean. With no
grand plans for the
future. No regrets
of the past.*

*We just survive.
We keep going.
That's all.*

Continued in the official comics sequel!

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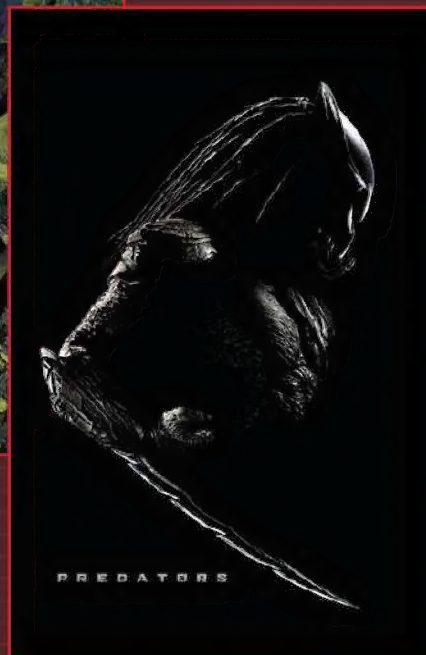
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JULY 2010



HORSEPOWER!

LOVE AND WONDER ARE TWO WORDS WE BELIEVE IN AT DARK HORSE MANGA

—you might say we believed in them long before it was fashionable. Back in 1994, there was this home-video commercial that expressed the image of “manga” in the early nineties, for it featured a mascot named “Manga Man.” Manga Man wasn’t, as you might assume, big eyed and tousle haired. He looked more like a *Judge Dredd* villain—bald, scarred, teeth clenched, one eye covered by a monocle with cross hairs—and he screamed “MAIN-GAH!!!”—shifting his vowels and striking terror.

So now you can understand that when, sixteen years ago, Dark Horse premiered what is to this day our longest-running series, Kosuke Fujishima’s *Oh My Goddess!*—with its saga of a nice-guy college student, and his beautiful and literally divine girlfriend—well, its content would have been shocking to some. I mean, there was no disembowelment. People were sipping tea, not coughing bile, and hunting for nice apartments instead of killer cyborgs.

This kind of paradigm shift, from blood and terror to love and wonder, can be seen at work in one of our most recent ongoing manga series, Osamu Takahashi’s *Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Shinji Ikari Raising Project*. As the original *Evangelion* anime of the nineties ended in a literal apocalypse, it is sometimes forgotten today that the series also featured romantic comedy and gag humor, and that the final episode imagined what its characters might be like if they had been allowed to live happier lives—exactly the scenario *The Shinji Ikari Raising Project* plays out.

Clover, *Chobits*, and *Cardcaptor Sakura* are recent and upcoming Dark Horse titles by CLAMP, a partnership between four manga creators—Satsuki Igarashi, Mokona, Tsubaki Nekoi, and Nanase Ohkawa. CLAMP have brought their sensibilities developed in *shojo* manga—with its emphasis on turning emotion into action—to an international crossover readership of men and women alike.

We see this in *Clover*, set in a lush, baroque world of retro technology, where CLAMP uses the personal life of a special-forces agent to examine what love means when one partner (but not the other) knows that they are facing death. CLAMP’s *Chobits*, about future love between people and the artificial humanoids called “persocoms,” departs from the abstract SF debate about the humanity of robots to suggest the relevant question would be not what both sides truly are, but

what they really feel about each other. *Cardcaptor Sakura*, a magical girl classic (and one might also say, a *shojo* take on how to do superheroes), is an action-packed saga that is also, in the words of *The Complete Manga Guide*, “about love in all its many forms: sibling love, childhood crushes, unrequited love, true love.”

Few Dark Horse creators express love and wonder together so sumptuously as Mi-Kyung Yun, in her ongoing *manhwa* series *Bride of the Water God*. Its heroine Soah’s struggle for love amidst the intrigues of the divine realm contains touches of modern humor and irony, but also references the classic romantic poetry of East Asia that contemplates the wonders of the earth and sky. In reading such scenes in *Bride*, you realize how much of the roots of fantasy are to be found in the fascinations of the real world, and that this wonder is open to anyone who will go halfway to meet it.

Love and wonder is that strange kind of adventure where the quest is for a midpoint, and the hope is finding someone who came there with the same desire. There are no guarantees; that is exactly what makes these Dark Horse stories—and this life—adventures, and not mere fairy tales.



—Carl Horn
Editor



YOU LOVE COMICS! WE LOVE COMICS, TOO!



Mac Walters, lead writer at BioWare, has been hooked on interactive stories since first using a Commodore PET as a wee lad. Despite coming late to comics—blame video games—Mac’s made up for lost time with the hit *Mass Effect* series, where he’s enjoyed the novelty of writing a single ending per story.



DH alum (13 years!) **Dan Jackson** recently branched out on his own as a freelance colorist. He’s a talented and very reliable guy, and we have to say, WE MISS HAVING YOU AT HQ, DAN! (Sorry for the yelling . . . had to make sure Dan could hear us over all that insane metal music.) Rocker salute!

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